

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An apparatus unit replacement assisting method,
~~characterized by~~ comprising:

a step of receiving, from a first user, request information expressing a wish to replace
a first unit comprising part of a first apparatus owned by said first user with a second unit;

a step of receiving, from a second user different from said first user, release
information informing release of a second unit comprising part of a second apparatus owned
by said second user and usable in said first apparatus; [[and]]

a step of presenting inquiry information to said first user, ~~asking~~ communicating via a
computer whether said first user is going to use said second unit released from said second
user as a replacement unit for said first apparatus,

wherein the first apparatus and the second apparatus are medical equipment.

Claim 2 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to
claim 1, further comprising:

a step of making a provisional contract with said first user when information
expressing a wish to use said second unit is received from said first user in response to the
inquiry.

Claim 3 (Original): The apparatus unit, replacement assisting method according to
claim 1, wherein:

said first unit and said second unit are units having substantially a same capability that
need to be replaced by a worker.

Claim 4 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of performing maintenance on said second unit released from said second user.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, wherein:

said step of presenting the inquiry information is a step of offering maintenance for said second unit taken from said second user ~~and done with maintenance~~.

Claim 6 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of calculating and presenting a trade-in price of said second unit to said second user in a case where said second user wishes to replace said second unit with a third unit.

Claim 7 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 6, wherein:

said step of presenting the trade-in price is a step of presenting said second user a price of said third unit after deduction of the trade-in price of said second unit.

Claim 8 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 6, wherein:

said step of presenting the trade-in price includes, making a trial calculation of the trade-in price by adding expenses needed for replacement including a transportation fee to a trade-in base price, judging a value of a trade-in from the trial calculation, and presenting the trade-in price to the second user when the trade-in is judged as profitable.

Claim 9 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 6, further comprising:

a step of having said second user wishing to trade in said second unit present operation history information through an on-line or off-line transmission in a case where said apparatus is configured to automatically record the operation history information during use, and judging a value of a trade-in with understanding of a use status of said unit for trade-in from the operation history information,

wherein said step of presenting the trade-in price includes determining the trade-in price based on a result of the value judgment.

Claim 10 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, wherein:

said step of presenting the inquiry information is a step of presenting said first user a replacement cost lower than a price of said second unit when newly purchased.

Claim 11 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of confirming with said first user whether said second unit as a desired replacement unit is a new unit or a secondhand unit or whether a secondhand unit is acceptable.

Claim 12 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of confirming with said second user about information related to post-treatment of said second unit.

Claim 13 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of presenting information about a maintenance fee of said second unit to said second user.

Claim 14 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of presenting expenses needed for replacement with said second unit to said first user.

Claim 15 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of presenting a dispatch date of a service person who performs unit replacement to said first user.

Claim 16 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of confirming a reply from said first user; and

a step of managing at least one of a production line in a factory, a unit maintenance line, and dispatch of a service person, depending on the reply from said first user.

Claim 17 (Original): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, wherein:

said first apparatus and said second apparatus are X-ray computed tomography apparatus and said units are detectors, X-ray tubes, or diagnostic table apparatuses.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): An apparatus unit replacing method, comprising:
a step of notifying, from a user to a unit provider and manager, a replacement request of a unit comprising part of an apparatus;

a step of notifying, from said user to said unit provider and manager, a specific target replacement unit; and

a step of ~~notifying~~ communicating via a computer, from said user to said unit provider and manager, whether said user wishes a new unit or a secondhand unit for the target replacement unit,

wherein the apparatus is medical equipment.

Claim 19 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 18, wherein:

said unit is a unit that needs to be replaced by a worker.

Claim 20 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 18, further comprising:

a step of confirming whether the unit specified by said user is replaceable in said apparatus.

Claim 21 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 18,
further comprising:

a step of fixing a date when a worker replaces said unit with the target replacement.

Claim 22 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 18,
further comprising:

a step of confirming with said user whether said unit to be replaced is for trade-in.

Claim 23 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 22,
further comprising:

a step of confirming a trade-in price or an assessed price of said unit for trade-in when
said user wishes a trade-in.

Claim 24 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 23,
wherein:

said step of confirming the trade-in price or the assessed price includes, making a trial
calculation of the trade-in price or the assessed price by adding expenses needed for
replacement including a transportation fee to a trade-in base price, and judging a value of the
trade-in from or assessed the trial calculation.

Claim 25 (Original): The apparatus unit replacing method according to claim 23,
further comprising:

a step of having said user wishing to trade in said unit present operation history
information through an on-line or off-line transmission in a case where said apparatus is
configured to automatically record the operation history information during use, and judging

a value of the trade-in with understanding of a use status of said unit for trade-in from the operation history information,

wherein said step of confirming the trade-in price or the assessed price includes determining the trade-in price or the assessed price based on a result of the value judgment.

Claim 26 (Withdrawn): An apparatus unit replacement assisting system, comprising:
a plurality of user apparatuses owned by a plurality of apparatus users; and
one or more management apparatus owned by an apparatus manager,
wherein said management apparatus includes:
communication means for enabling communications with said plurality of user apparatuses;

request information managing means for managing request information received from a first user apparatus among said plurality of user apparatuses through said communication means, said request information expressing a wish to replace a first unit comprising part of a first apparatus owned by an apparatus user of said first user apparatus with a second unit;

release information managing means for managing release information received from a second user apparatus, different from said first user apparatus, among said plurality of user apparatuses through said communication means, said release information informing release of a second unit comprising part of a second apparatus owned by an apparatus user of said second user apparatus and usable in said first apparatus; and

inquiry information notifying means for notifying, through said communication means, said first user apparatus of inquiry information, asking whether the second unit in said second apparatus is going to be used as a replacement unit for said first apparatus, and

wherein each user apparatus includes:

communication means enabling communications with any one of the one or more management apparatuses;

information notifying means for notifying said management apparatus of said unit replacement request information and said unit release information through said communication means; and

information presenting means for presenting said inquiry information received from said management apparatus through said communication means.

Claim 27 (Withdrawn): A management apparatus used in an apparatus unit replacement assisting system comprising a plurality of user apparatuses owned by a plurality of apparatus users and one or more management apparatus owned by an apparatus manager, said management apparatus being characterized by comprising:

communication means for enabling communications with said plurality of user apparatuses;

request information managing means for managing request information received from a first user apparatus among said plurality of user apparatuses through said communication means, said request information expressing a wish to replace a first unit comprising part of a first apparatus owned by an apparatus user of said first user apparatus with a second unit;

release information managing means for managing release information received from a second user apparatus, different from said first user apparatus, among said plurality of user apparatuses through said communication means, said release information informing release of a second unit comprising part of a second apparatus owned by an apparatus user of said second user apparatus and usable in said first apparatus; and

inquiry information notifying means for notifying, through said communication means, said first user apparatus of inquiry information, asking whether the second unit in said second apparatus is going to be used as a replacement unit for said first apparatus.

Claim 28 (Withdrawn): The management apparatus in the apparatus unit replacement assisting system according to claim 27, further comprising:

status managing means for managing at least any one of a production line status in a production factory of said apparatus, a maintenance line status of said unit, and a dispatch status of a service person who performs a replacement work, according to the replacement request information from said first user apparatus.

Claim 29 (Withdrawn): A user apparatus used in an apparatus unit replacement assisting system comprising a plurality of user apparatuses owned by a plurality of apparatus users and one or more management apparatus owned by an apparatus manager, said user apparatus being characterized by comprising:

communication means enabling communications with any one of the one or more management apparatuses;

information notifying means for notifying said management apparatus of said unit replacement request information and unit release information through said communication means; and

information presenting means for presenting inquiry information received from said management apparatus through said communication means.

Claim 30 (Withdrawn): An apparatus unit replacement assisting system, characterized by comprising:

managing means for managing information of a unit comprising part of an apparatus for each of apparatuses installed at a plurality of sites; and

confirming means for confirming, in response to information related to a request to replace said unit in an apparatus installed at any one of said plurality of sites, whether a secondhand unit is acceptable as a target replacement unit for said unit.

Claim 31 (Withdrawn): An apparatus unit replacement assisting system, characterized by comprising:

obtaining means for obtaining information of a unit comprising part of an apparatus for each of apparatuses installed at a plurality of sites; and

managing means for managing, in response to information related to a request to replace said unit in an apparatus installed at any one of said plurality of sites, at least one of a production line in a production factory of said apparatus, a maintenance line of said unit, dispatch of a service person who performs a replacement work of said unit.

Claim 32 (Withdrawn): An apparatus unit replacement assisting system, characterized by comprising:

obtaining means for obtaining information of a unit comprising part of an apparatus for each of apparatuses installed at a plurality of sites; and

presenting means for presenting, in response to information related to a request to replace a first unit with a second unit in an apparatus installed at one of said plurality of sites, a sales price of said second unit after deduction of a trade-in price of said first unit to a request sender site.

Claim 33 (Withdrawn): The apparatus unit replacement assisting system according to claim 32, wherein:

said presenting means makes a trial calculation of the trade-in price by adding expenses needed for replacement including a transportation fee to a trade-in base price, judges a value of a trade-in from the trial calculation, and presents the trade-in price when the trade-in is judged as profitable.

Claim 34 (Withdrawn): The apparatus unit replacement assisting system according to claim 32, wherein:

said obtaining means is operation history information during use that is automatically recorded by said apparatus; and

said presenting means judges a value of a trade-in with understanding of a use status of the unit for trade-in from the operation history information, and determines the trade-in price based on a result of the value judgment.

Claim 35 (New): The apparatus unit replacement assisting method according to claim 1, further comprising:

a step of receiving, from a third user different from said first and second users, request information expressing a wish to use said first unit in a third apparatus owned by said third user.

Claim 36 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, comprising:

a step of receiving request information from a first user apparatus via a network for exchanging a first unit comprised in a first medical equipment with a second unit;

a step of receiving release information from a second user apparatus via the network for releasing a second unit comprised in a second medical equipment, the second medical equipment being different from the first medical equipment; and

a step of sending inquiry information to the first user apparatus via the network, thereby inquiring of the first user apparatus as to whether or not the first unit comprised in the first medical equipment is replaced with the second unit released from the second medical equipment.

Claim 37 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, comprising:

a step of sending a replacement request from a user apparatus to a unit manage apparatus via a network, notifying the unit manage apparatus of a specific unit of a medical equipment; and

a step of sending a notification from the user apparatus to the unit manage apparatus via the network notifying the unit manage apparatus of whether the replacement request is a new unit or a secondhand unit.

Claim 38 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 36, wherein the first medical equipment and the second medical equipment are X-ray CT apparatuses, the first unit and the second unit are multi slice detectors, and the second unit is configured to collect a greater number of slices than the first unit.

Claim 39 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 36, wherein the first medical equipment and the second medical unit are X-ray CT apparatuses, the first unit is a single slice detector, and the second unit is a multi slice detector.

Claim 40 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 38, wherein the first unit and the second unit include data acquisition systems relating to the multi slice detector.

Claim 41 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 39, wherein the first unit and the second unit include data acquisition systems relating to the single slice detector and the multi slice detector.

Claim 42 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 40, wherein the first unit and the second unit include software for reconfiguration.

Claim 43 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 41, wherein the first unit and the second unit include software for reconfiguration.

Claim 44 (New): The method according to claim 36, further comprising:
a step of receiving operation history information about the second apparatus, and
judging a value of the second unit based on the operation history information.

Claim 45 (New): The method according to claim 37, further comprising:
a step of receiving operation history information about the second apparatus, and
judging a value of the second unit based on the operation history information.

Claim 46 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 36, wherein the first medical equipment and the second medical equipment are MRI apparatuses.

Claim 47 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 37, wherein the first medical equipment and the second medical equipment are MRI apparatuses.

Claim 48 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 46, wherein the first unit and the second unit are magnetic field coils.

Claim 49 (New): An apparatus unit replacing method, according to claim 47, wherein the first unit and the second unit are magnetic field coils.